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Illinois
Environmental
Protection Agency

Bureau of Land Pollution
2200 Churchill Road
P.O. Box 19276
Springfield, IL 62794-9276

February 1992

Guide to Household Paint Disposal

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*An introduction on how
to deal with your old or
unwanted paint*

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RECOMMENDED MI

Nearly every home has many products in it that may be considered hazardous. When those items are discarded or improperly used they can have devastating effects on sewage systems, septic tanks, and groundwater supplies.

One of the most common hazardous products found in homes is old or unusable paint. In Illinois, literally thousands of gallons of old paints are discarded into trash cans or down drains each year. There are, however, much better methods of dealing with your old paint.

USE IT UP

The easiest way to dispose of paints is to use them up completely. When finishing a painting project and a small amount of paint remains in the can continue to use it until it is all gone. If needed apply a second coat or touch-up areas which need improvement. Work closely with your paint dealer to estimate the exact quantity of paint needed for your job.



Many local theater groups, churches, and housing authorities will accept leftover paint and put it to good use. Also, contact friends, neighbors, and relatives who may have a need for the paint. Make sure that paint that you donate or give away is in its original container with a legible label.

METHODS FOR HOUSEHOLD PAINT DISPOSAL

HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE COLLECTIONS

If you are unable to use up or give away your old paint, the next best solution is take it to one of the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency's household hazardous waste collections. The collections are scheduled throughout the state. Contact the IEPA to find out when and where the collection nearest to you will be.

If a collection has not been scheduled in your area contact your local governmental unit and encourage them to apply for a household hazardous waste collection in your community. The collections are free of charge and not only provide an excellent method to rid your home of old paint but also of many other hazardous household products.



LAST RESORT DISPOSAL OPTIONS

If you are unable to drop off your old paint at a local household hazardous waste collection, there are a few steps you can take to make the paint safer to dispose of with your general refuse.

Some older paints contain pigment components such as lead, cadmium or mercury which may be identified on the label. Those products should always be taken to a household hazardous waste collection.

Latex Paint

Small amounts of latex paint can left to solidify by removing the lid and allowing the paint to dry out. Larger amounts can be mixed with an absorbent (kitty litter or oil dry) and left to solidify. Either of these methods should be done in a well ventilated area and away from children and pets. Be certain to allow the paint to dry completely. Once the paint has hardened/dried out it can be disposed of with your general refuse. Empty paint cans can be recycled or disposed of with your general refuse.



Solvent Based Paint

If at all possible solvent or oil based paints should be kept for a hazardous waste disposal day. They are ignitable and present particular hazards. If you absolutely must dispose of solvent based paints before you can get it to a collection day, special care must be taken to harden/dry out the paint. Small amounts of solvent based paint can be painted onto old lumber or cardboard and allowed to dry. Once it has dried it can be disposed of with your general refuse or additional coats can be painted on.



Larger amounts may be mixed with large amounts of absorbent (kitty litter or oil dry) and left to harden. This must be done away from ignition sources and in a thoroughly ventilated area. Only after the paint has completely hardened should you dispose of it with your general refuse.



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Other Paint Products

Paint thinners, turpentine, mineral spirits, and other solvents must not be poured down drains or storm sewers. With a few simple steps, these products can be made reusable. Let used turpentine or brush cleaners sit in a closed container until the paint particles settle out. The clear liquid can be poured into a new, labeled container for reuse. The remaining residues can be mixed with an absorbent (kitty litter or oil dry) and left to dry out.



For more information contact:

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GENERAL TIPS ON HAZARDOUS PRODUCTS

- Buy only the quantities you need.
- Always store products according to label directions. Keep unused products in their original containers.
- Always avoid skin contact and breathing fumes.
- NEVER mix different products. Explosive or violent chemical reactions may occur.
- If at all possible find a friend, neighbor, or local organization who can use up the excess products for their intended uses.
- Never dispose of hazardous household products except in an approved manner. When disposed of improperly many hazardous products can contaminate groundwater supplies or disrupt sewage treatment systems and pass through into rivers, lakes, or streams.

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